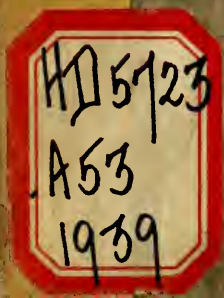


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FORMER RELIEF CASES IN PRIVATE EMPLOYMENT



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FORMER RELIEF CASES IN PRIVATE EMPLOYMENT

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1939

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE, WASHINGTON

2485723
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1939

U. S. Works Progress Administration
May 12, 1939

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Former Relief Cases in Private Employment

INTRODUCTION

THE RETURN to self-support through private employment is the one solution of the relief problem upon which business, industry, Government, taxpayers, and relief recipients can agree. Yet it is obvious that this solution is no more permanent than the private employment which terminates a relief case. Much of the confusion that has grown up around the fact that the relief rolls do not disappear when business improves is the direct result of failure to realize this simple fact. From the very beginning of the FERA to the present time private employment has been taking people off relief. For some of these workers relief is an incident happily brought to a conclusion, but for others the employment is a matter of only a few weeks or months and then unemployment again forces them back on public assistance rolls.

This constant change in the personnel of the relief population, or turnover, has been apparent from the start. In addition to the new cases added each month and the old cases closed, *reopened* cases—that is, families returning to relief or WPA rolls after a period of separation—contribute to the changing picture of the relief load. Despite this knowledge there has been a tendency to think of cases that have been "closed for private employment" not only as removed from immediate need of assistance but also from the likelihood of need in the near future. Unfortunately, as this report shows, the fact of private employment often provides no definite assurance that the return to self-support is more than a temporary change in status.

Whether or not private employment actually closes a relief case in more than a temporary or a technical sense depends upon a complex of factors among which the fluctuation of industrial activity, the worker's skill or industrial quality, and the wages paid are of prime importance. Until more is known of just what does happen to families which leave the relief rolls because of private employment, it is impossible even to identify all these factors, much less to evaluate them.

In order to follow the work experiences of cases leaving the relief rolls for private employment, a small but representative group of such cases was selected and their economic condition was determined month by month during the year following their removal from relief. The families were all receiving general relief in the summer of 1935, prior to the time their private jobs enabled them to leave the rolls. Aside from this essential condition of comparability, the families differed enough in size, occupational experience, age, and type of employment secured to afford a general insight into what happens to relief cases when they go into private employment.

The 13 cities in which these families were studied were: Atlanta, Ga.; Baltimore, Md.; Bridgeport, Conn.; Butte, Mont.; Chicago, Ill.; Detroit, Mich.; Houston, Tex.; Manchester, N. H.; Omaha, Nebr.; Paterson, N. J.; St. Louis, Mo.; San Francisco, Calif.; and Wilkes-Barre, Pa. Thus, a wide range of industrial as well as geographical factors were represented in the experiences of this group of cases. The general characteristics of the total relief load from which the cases were selected have already been described in a preceding bulletin.¹

The present report deals with only a sample segment from this total; that is, a sample of the cases that withdrew from the relief load during the summer of 1935 because of private employment. In the 13 cities studied, about 10,000 cases a month, or approximately 3 percent of the average monthly relief load, left relief because of private employment between May and October 1935. From these 60,000 cases a sample was drawn which, while it was large enough to justify statistical treatment, was not so large that it made intensive investigation impossible. Detailed information on employment, income, and changes in family composition was obtained for 1,108 cases² by monthly interviews with each case and by reference to records of the various public agencies. The survey covered the period from September 1935 through September 1936, but in most instances data are presented on an annual basis only, October 1935—September 1936.

¹Carmichael, F. L. and Payne, Stanley L., *The 1935 Relief Population in 13 Cities: A Cross-Section*, Research Bulletin Series I, No. 23, Division of Social Research, Works Progress Administration, Washington, D. C., January 1937.

²Of the 1,108 cases 1,048 were closed from relief because jobs were secured in private industry and 60 because of increased earnings at private jobs already held. For number of cases studied in each of the 13 cities, see appendix table 1.

S U M M A R Y

THIS REPORT presents the findings of a study of 1,108 families in 13 cities which left the relief rolls during the summer of 1935 because a member of the family had obtained employment in private industry. It shows that, even during a period of increasing business activity, the obtaining of a private job provides no definite assurance that a closed relief case will not again need public assistance.

During the 12 months, October 1935—September 1936, a total of three-fifths of the cases studied were forced to seek assistance from public funds, either because they had lost their jobs or because their earnings were not sufficient to maintain them. Their employment showed a marked seasonal fluctuation, declining in the fall and winter and increasing during the spring and summer.

The number of jobs held averaged about two for every worker despite the fact that almost one-fifth of the employable persons went through the entire period of the study without being able to find a job. The two jobs combined, however, provided employment for an average of but little more than half of the period.

The private employment income of the cases averaged \$642 for every case, but there was no concentration of earnings around this average.

The average total annual income from all sources combined was \$897 for every case. Over \$200 of this income came from the Works Program or general relief and a small amount from miscellaneous sources.

A comparison of the total incomes of these cases with cost of living investigations reveals that the average family was able to maintain no better than an emergency level of living—a level which, if adhered to over a prolonged period, would subject its members to serious health hazards.

The characteristics of the cases that left relief for private employment differentiated them sharply from those that remained behind on the relief rolls. At the time these cases were closed

they had been receiving assistance less than half as long as the other cases in the active load. Younger workers were favored by private industry over older workers, as were men over women and whites over Negroes. Skilled and semiskilled workers found jobs more easily than did persons in other occupations; and every occupational group was given preference over persons who had had no previous work experience.

Among the conclusions of this report are the following: A great many of the cases leaving relief because of private employment may be expected to reappear on the public assistance rolls within a year following their separation. These cases are forced to return because of unstable employment and low earnings, occasioned by the fact that they are part of a reserve labor supply drawn upon largely for the seasonal needs of industry. Even with the help of public funds their incomes are below any reasonably adequate level of living. The cases going into private employment were, in a sense, a preferred group. This makes the high proportion of cases returning to public assistance rolls more significant.

FORMER RELIEF CASES IN PRIVATE EMPLOYMENT

THE UNCERTAINTIES of private employment are well illustrated by the experiences of 1,108 cases that left the relief rolls for private employment during the summer of 1935. The employment obtained by some of these cases was lost within a few weeks,¹ and the earnings of others were so small that they were inadequate for support without some supplementary assistance from general relief or the Works Program.² During the year beginning in October 1935 the proportion of these cases having private employment varied from month to month, but at no time were more than three-fourths of them entirely independent of both direct and work relief. The fluctuations in their private employment and the resulting variations in their relief needs are shown by months in figure 1.³

¹In fact, 17 percent of the cases had already lost their jobs and had no private employment in October 1935, and almost 7 percent of the total cases had no private employment during the following year.

²As used in these pages, the term *private employment* includes not only work for private individuals or organizations and self-employment in such capacity as store proprietor or contractor but also regular employment in permanent governmental agencies. *Works Program employment* refers to work carried on under the Works Progress Administration, Civilian Conservation Corps, Public Works Administration, and other agencies operating under the Emergency Relief Appropriation Acts of 1935 and 1936. *General relief* is outdoor relief distributed through organized agencies, such as emergency relief administrations and county or municipal departments of public welfare; it excludes categorical relief in such forms as aid to the blind, old-age assistance, and mothers' aid. *Categorical relief*, in this report, is included in miscellaneous income. *Public assistance* includes Works Program employment and general relief.

³The fact that a case had two or more sources of income in a particular month does not necessarily mean that it received income from these sources concurrently. Thus, if a case had Works Program employment during the first week of the month and private employment during the last week, both sources were reported for that month. In particular, it was the practice to continue relief payments to a case transferred to the Works Program until the first full pay check was received. This practice accounts for the large proportion of cases having both Works Program and general relief incomes in the early months. It should be pointed out in this connection that income from both private and Works Program employment was reported for the month in which the work was done and not necessarily the month in which payment was received.

Some cases did receive income from two or more sources simultaneously and throughout the month. These were, for the most part, large cases whose income from private employment or from the Works Program was inadequate to support them according to relief standards. General relief was granted to make up the deficiency. Similarly, supplementation of private employment, even in small cases, was necessary when such employment was only part-time.

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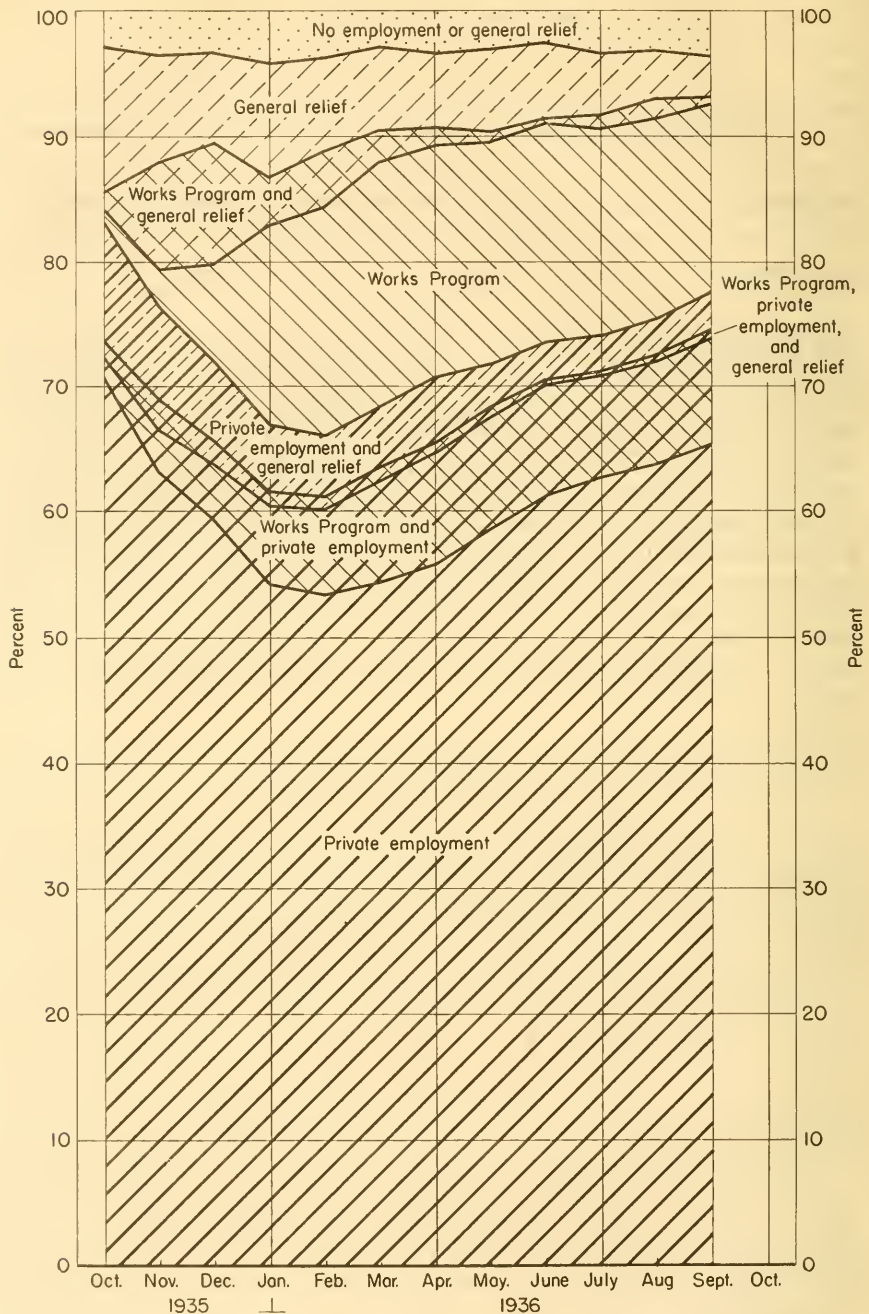


Fig. 1—MEANS OF SUPPORT OF CASES STUDIED
October 1935—September 1936

Note: Only the 3 chief means of support—private employment, Works Program employment, and general relief—are presented in this figure. Some of the cases had miscellaneous means of support in addition to those shown.

Source: Appendix table 2.

AF-2987, WPA

Private employment remained the most important means of support throughout the 12 months beginning in October 1935, but it fell far short of providing full support for all the 1,108 cases. During the 12 months the low point in need for public assistance occurred in October, shortly after the workers had obtained jobs. In that month slightly over one-fourth of the cases received general relief or Works Program assistance. The high point in need came in February and March when about 43 percent of the cases received public aid.

A month-by-month picture, however, does not tell the whole story. The continual movement of cases off and on the public assistance rolls as a result of fluctuations in private employment is understated in the monthly account. During the 12 months, October 1935—September 1936, almost three-fifths of the cases studied received some public assistance (table 1). In other

Table 1.—Means of Support of Cases Studied During the Year October 1935—September 1936,
13 Cities

Means of support	Cases studied
Total: Number.....	1,106
Percent.....	100.0
Private employment, no public assistance.....	40.7
Private employment and public assistance.....	52.5
Public assistance, no private employment.....	6.7
Miscellaneous means of support.....	0.1

¹2 cases with means of support not ascertainable are excluded from the total.

words, only two out of every five cases managed to remain completely independent of aid from public funds for 12 consecutive months following their separation from the relief rolls.

Here, then, were some 1,100 families in widely distributed urban areas which, midway in a period of increasing business activity throughout the Nation, obtained employment that yielded income sufficient to take them off relief. Yet, during the ensuing 12 months a substantial proportion of these families was back on general relief or was employed on the Works Program. Obviously, the employment that many of the cases secured did not provide a permanent solution of their needs.

Although private employment at low wage levels is notoriously insecure of tenure, the employment records of the 1,108 former relief cases show an unusually high proportion of short-run jobs. The uncertainty of job tenure encountered by many of these families is related largely to the nature of the employment obtained and the industrial quality of the workers who secured the jobs.

As to the nature of the employment, many of the jobs obtained were in industries that operate only a few months during the year or in industries that supplement their regular working force during a short period of peak activity. Seasonal operations of industry depend upon a surplus labor supply ready at hand and

willing to take short-time jobs. Indeed, most seasonal industries could not exist were there no labor reserve on call. Able-bodied workers on relief constitute a readily available labor surplus; and it is not surprising to find that a considerable proportion of these workers were back on relief after a few weeks or months.

The second factor of major importance underlying the short private employment tenure of former relief cases is the quality of their workers from the industrial point of view. The effect of this factor is much more difficult to identify than is the effect of the kind of employment secured, but there seems to be little question of its extensive operation. It is a well-known fact that the workers judged by industry to be the least productive are the first to be laid off when business declines and the last to be rehired when it picks up. Because of this fact there is reason to believe that many of the workers on relief during the summer of 1935 were judged by employers to be less productive than those already reabsorbed.

There is still another point which helps to explain the employer's attitude toward the relief worker: A worker's skill tends to deteriorate through disuse. In this connection, a recent report on an investigation of the long-time unemployed in England has this to say:

But unemployed men are not simply units of employability who can, through the medium of the dole, be put into cold storage and taken out again immediately they are needed. While they are in cold storage, things are liable to happen to them.⁴

There seems to be little doubt that the effects of unemployment and relief are cumulative. In the early years of the depression little was done to maintain the skill and work habits of the unemployed on relief. For the last 3 years, however, the Government has had in operation a program designed to conserve some of the skill of this idle manpower. It is felt that the Works Program, by giving work to the unemployed, will help to maintain the work habits of the workers and thus will facilitate their reabsorption into private industry.

NUMBER OF JOBS AND DURATION OF EMPLOYMENT

In a discussion of this kind it is convenient to treat the relief household or case as a unit and to talk of the kind of employment and the duration of the job obtained by the case. Actually, of course, it is the individual worker or workers in the household who obtain or fail to obtain employment. Because a fairly substantial proportion of the cases included in this report had more than one worker, it will be helpful to drop the case unit for the moment and consider private employment in terms of the individual worker.

⁴*Men Without Work*, a report made to the Pilgrim Trust, Cambridge University Press, London, England, 1938, p. 67.

In the group of 1,108 cases there were 1,636 persons, all 16 years of age or older, who were working or seeking work throughout the period September 1, 1935, through September 30, 1936. Among them, these 1,636 workers secured a total of 3,021 private jobs, or nearly 2 jobs each during the 13 months, indicating an active participation in the labor market (appendix table 4). A comparison of total workers with total jobs, however, disguises the fact that nearly one-fifth of the workers went through the entire 13 months without finding a single job. Thus, the average number of jobs obtained by successful work seekers was greater than two. The workers who found no jobs were in relief cases that were closed because of the employment secured by another worker in the case.

The importance of the kind of employment secured by workers in former relief cases becomes clearly evident at this point. Instead of being an encouraging indication of their employability, the number of jobs secured was actually an indication that many of the workers were on the outer fringes of the labor market, and that they were called upon to fill the casual and short-time offerings that accompany seasonal variations in business activity. A third as many jobs—say 1,000 among the 1,108 cases—if reasonably permanent would have meant the complete liquidation of most of these cases as public assistance risks, whereas, despite an average of nearly 3 jobs for every case within a period of 13 months, only 2 out of 5 of these cases were able to remain completely independent of assistance.

Further evidence that short-time or intermittent employment was the reason so many of these cases returned to relief is supplied in the form of the total amount of employment obtained by the individual workers during the year (table 2).

It may be seen from this table that about one-third of the workers had either no employment or employment for less than 3 months during the 13 months and that only a little more than one-fourth of the workers were employed for at least 12 of the 13 months. The average amount of employment secured by each worker, including workers with no jobs, was 6.8 months out of the 13.

It has already been shown that the number of jobs obtained during the 13 months was considerably greater than the number of workers; it follows, therefore, that the total amount of employment obtained by each worker was greater than the duration of the separate jobs. In terms of averages the jobs obtained by the 1,636 workers in the 1,108 cases lasted about 3.7 months.⁵

⁵The average of 3.7 months is restricted to the duration of individual jobs during the 13 months. Time spent on jobs prior to September 1, 1935, and on jobs after September 30, 1936, is not included. The total duration of individual jobs up to September 30, 1936, is shown in appendix table 5, where jobs ended during the study and jobs continuing at the end of the study are shown separately.

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Table 2.—Total Amount of Private Employment Between September 1, 1935, and September 30, 1936, of Persons in Cases Studied Who Were Employable¹ Throughout the 13 Months, 13 Cities

Amount of private employment during the 13 months	Workers employable throughout the 13 months	
	Percent distribution	Cumulative percent distribution
Total-----	1,636	1,636
Total-----	100.0	100.0
No employment-----	18.9	18.9
Less than 30 days-----	4.8	23.7
1 month but less than 2 months-----	4.0	27.7
2 months but less than 3 months-----	4.3	32.0
3 months but less than 4 months-----	3.0	35.0
4 months but less than 6 months-----	6.9	41.9
6 months but less than 8 months-----	8.6	50.5
8 months but less than 10 months-----	8.7	59.2
10 months but less than 12 months-----	10.6	69.8
12 months to full 13 months-----	26.8	96.6
Duration not ascertainable-----	3.4	100.0
Average ² duration-----	6.8 months	

¹ 16 years of age and over and working or seeking work.

² Arithmetic mean.

At the end of the period (September 30, 1936) 1,002 private jobs were held by members of these cases,⁶ and about half of these jobs had been secured less than 6 months before the end of the study. Small wonder, then, that more than half of the cases selected from among those closed because of private employment found it necessary to reapply for assistance before a year had elapsed.

AMOUNT OF INCOME FROM PRIVATE EMPLOYMENT

The number of jobs obtained during the 12-month period, the average duration of these jobs, and the total amount of employment obtained by each worker help to explain why many of the 1,108 cases found it necessary to reapply for assistance within a few months of the time they left the relief rolls. This information provides at best only a partial explanation, however, until the earnings from private employment are examined. During the 12 months (October 1935—September 1936) the total income from private employment amounted, on the average, to \$642 for every case in the group studied.⁷

For all their convenience, averages are notoriously inadequate descriptions of income; the wide variations in income that are concealed by the \$642 average are clearly set forth in table 3.

⁶ In addition to the 1,636 persons who were working or seeking work throughout the 13 months, 147 persons 16 years of age or older were working or seeking work on the last day of September 1936. Jobs held by the latter group are included in the 1,002 jobs mentioned.

⁷ Noncash earnings were excluded from the income figures. See page 9 for a description of noncash income.

FORMER RELIEF CASES IN PRIVATE EMPLOYMENT • 7

Table 3.—Amount of Annual Cash Income Earned in Private Employment by Cases Studied
October 1935—September 1936, 13 Cities

Annual private employment income	Cases studied	
	Number	Percent
Total	1,108	100.0
Cases with no private employment	75	6.8
Cases with private employment	1,033	93.2
\$0—\$49	56	5.1
\$50—\$99	61	5.5
\$100—\$149	39	3.5
\$150—\$199	45	4.1
\$200—\$249	36	3.2
\$250—\$299	32	2.9
\$300—\$349	37	3.3
\$350—\$399	27	2.4
\$400—\$499	62	5.6
\$500—\$599	83	7.5
\$600—\$699	73	6.6
\$700—\$799	97	8.8
\$800—\$899	61	5.5
\$900—\$999	64	5.8
\$1,000—\$1,199	90	8.1
\$1,200—\$1,399	59	5.3
\$1,400—\$1,599	39	3.5
\$1,600 or more	47	4.2
Amount not ascertainable	25	2.3
Average ¹ annual private employment income:		
Total cases	\$642	
Cases with private employment	690	

¹Arithmetic mean.

Of equal, if not greater, importance than the average income and the range of incomes is the lack of pronounced concentration at any point along the scale. Thus, 84 cases had private employment incomes of \$100 to \$200, while 83 cases had incomes of \$500 to \$600 and 64 cases, \$900 to \$1,000.

It is apparent from the figures presented in table 3 that over a period of 12 months the income from private employment for many of the cases leaving relief was sadly inadequate as a means of support. And this, together with the information on the amount of employment secured, provides the explanation for the return of about three-fifths of the cases studied to the public assistance rolls during the year of observation. The incomes of the two-fifths that did not return were, presumably, sufficient to provide the necessities of life, although this smaller group included some cases with incomes below the average for all cases (appendix table 6).

The average income of the two-fifths of the cases that received no general relief or Works Program assistance during the year was \$1,010, or \$368 higher than the average private earnings of all cases combined. Part of this difference is due to the fact that the \$1,010 average includes some income obtained from miscellaneous sources, such as pensions and insurance, but by far

the greater part of the income of the cases that remained self-supporting came from private employment.

While over a fourth of the completely self-supporting cases had annual incomes above \$1,200, more than an eighth received less than \$500 during the year.⁸ About a half of the cases had annual incomes above \$900. These income figures show that although some of the cases that left relief were on the way to full economic independence, others, while they managed to get along without aid from public funds, had to subsist on very small incomes.

The private employment incomes of the cases in the different months reflect the steadily increasing prosperity of the period during which the cases were studied. Excluding the cases that had no employment, average earnings for 5 months at quarterly intervals beginning with September 1935 rose from \$67 in that month to \$79 in September 1936 (table 4). This rise was due in

Table 4.—Average¹ Amount of Income of Cases Studied, by Source, for the Year October 1935—September 1936, and for 5 Selected Months, 13 Cities

Source of income	Average annual income October 1935— September 1936	Average monthly income				
		September 1935	December 1935	March 1936	June 1936	September 1936
All cases						
All sources	\$597	\$67	\$70	\$77	\$80	\$81
Private employment	642	56	49	52	58	61
Works Program	159	1	12	17	15	15
General relief	55	8	7	4	3	2
Other sources	41	2	2	4	4	3
Cases receiving income from specified source						
Private employment	\$690	\$67	\$68	\$75	\$80	\$79
Works Program	396	33	49	56	58	59
General relief	112	26	28	28	31	33
Other sources	115	18	16	22	24	19

¹Arithmetic mean.

Note.—The lower half of this table shows average income from each source for only the cases having income from that source during the year or the month indicated. Thus, the \$396-average annual Works Program income shown in the lower half of the table is the average amount received by the 445 cases which during the year had some income from the Works Program. The \$159-average annual Works Program income shown in the upper half of the table is the amount each case would have received had the total amount of Works Program income earned by the 445 cases been distributed equally among the 1,108 cases studied.

part to higher rates of pay, but most of it was the result of longer and steadier working hours common to most industries throughout the country at the time.

It should be pointed out that average monthly earnings, when computed for the entire group of cases including those without employment, did not increase steadily but showed a definite seasonal trend. The averages for all cases combined were lower in the winter months than in the summer and fall months chiefly

⁸The number of persons in these lower-income cases is not known. It is probable, however, that most of them were one- or two-person cases. It is also probable that many of them had considerable noncash income, which is not included in the income figures (p. 9).

because fewer of the cases had jobs during the winter. But the September 1935 average of \$56 was \$5 below the September 1936 average, although the total number of cases with employment was greater in the former month than in the latter.⁹ This increase in average monthly earnings for the group as a whole is explained by the higher earnings of the cases that had employment in the later months of the study.

Total Income

Although the average annual income from private employment of the 1,108 cases was \$642, most of them also received income from other sources during the year. For the group of cases as a whole, the Works Program was the most important of these other sources: An average of \$159 for every case was earned on work projects. General relief contributed one-third as much as the Works Program, while income from miscellaneous sources averaged \$41 for every case (table 4 and appendix tables 9 and 10).

All sources combined, the average income of the 1,108 cases for the year October 1935—September 1936 was \$897. This figure includes cash income from all sources except the soldiers' bonus¹⁰ which was distributed in June 1936. In addition to cash other items, such as food, clothing, rent, and medical care, are included when given by relief agencies. The monetary value of such items was taken from the records of the agencies. Non-cash income earned in private employment or given to the family by friends or relatives is not included because of the difficulty of correct evaluation. Although such income in kind is considered to be, on the average, unimportant, it is true that a few cases lived almost entirely on noncash income. The exclusion of such income from the figures presented here should be kept in mind.

The distribution of the cases according to their total annual incomes is shown in table 5. Although the average was \$897,¹¹ three-tenths of the cases had incomes over \$1,000 and 3 percent had more than \$2,000. But almost a fourth received less than

⁹ In September 1935, 84.1 percent of the cases had private employment; in September 1936 the proportion was 77.5 percent.

¹⁰ Soldiers' bonus was received by 8 percent of the cases. The average payment was \$484. If the annual income of all cases had been computed with the bonus included, the average would have been raised only from \$897 to \$933. Because the soldiers' bonus was an unusual and nonrecurrent type of income, it has been excluded from the income figures.

¹¹ The incomes of the 1,108 former relief cases studied may be compared with the actual incomes of nonrelief families as reported in National Resources Committee, *Consumer Incomes in the United States—Their Distribution in 1935—36*, Washington, D. C., 1938. That investigation found that for all nonrelief families in all communities, urban and rural, the mean annual income was \$1,781 while their median income was \$1,285. In cities of 25,000 or more the mean family income was \$2,230 a year and the median was \$1,560. In the present study the text refers to the mean income of \$897 for the 1,108 cases. The median income of the same cases was \$819.

Table 5.—Amount of Annual Income Received From All Sources Combined by Cases Studied October 1935—September 1936, 13 Cities

Annual income from all sources combined	Cases studied	
	Number	Percent
Total-----	1,108	100.0
\$0—\$49-----	1	0.1
\$50—\$99-----	5	0.5
\$100—\$149-----	6	0.5
\$150—\$199-----	13	1.2
\$200—\$249-----	13	1.2
\$250—\$299-----	21	1.9
\$300—\$349-----	28	2.5
\$350—\$399-----	25	2.3
\$400—\$499-----	50	4.5
\$500—\$599-----	101	9.1
\$600—\$699-----	118	10.6
\$700—\$799-----	128	11.5
\$800—\$899-----	118	10.6
\$900—\$999-----	96	8.7
\$1,000—\$1,199-----	128	11.5
\$1,200—\$1,399-----	90	8.1
\$1,400—\$1,599-----	53	4.8
\$1,600—\$1,999-----	39	3.5
\$2,000—\$2,399-----	21	1.9
\$2,400—\$2,799-----	4	0.4
\$2,800 or more-----	4	0.4
Not ascertainable-----	46	4.2
Average ¹ annual income-----	\$897	

¹ Arithmetic mean.

\$600 during the year and over 5 percent had less than \$300 from all sources.

The amount of money necessary to support a family varies, of course, with the number of persons in the family. On the assumption that the income distribution of one case-size group in this study would give a general idea of the adequacy of the incomes of the other case-size groups, the amount of income of the four-person cases that did not change in size during the year was tabulated. For the 175 cases that had 4 members throughout the year, the average income was \$964 (appendix table 7). A fourth of them had incomes of less than \$700, while less than a fifth received more than \$1,200 during the 12 months.

A general idea of what these income figures mean can be obtained by comparing them with a cost of living investigation¹² conducted in March 1935, which included 11 of the present 13 cities.¹³ According to the findings of that study, the average cost of supporting a manual worker's family of 4 persons at a maintenance level of living in these 11 cities was \$1,302; the cost of an emergency level was \$934 (appendix table 8).

¹²Stecker, Margaret Loomis, *Intercity Differences in Costs of Living in March 1935, 59 Cities*, Research Monograph XII, Division of Social Research, Works Progress Administration, Washington, D. C., 1937.

¹³Paterson and Wilkes-Barre were excluded.

Families "forced to exist at the emergency level for an extended period would be subject to serious health hazards."

A similar survey made in 70 cities by the National Industrial Conference Board in February 1935 found that for a 4-person family an average weekly budget "which would provide an adequate allowance of the primary necessities" required \$24.43, or \$1,270 a year.¹⁴

Judged by the cost of living levels established by the two studies, the incomes of most of the four-person cases included in this survey were low. Although differences of opinion exist as to the point at which income falls below the danger line, it seems clear that by any reasonable standard the incomes of a large proportion of the cases that left relief would be considered inadequate.

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

These cases that left relief rolls for private employment in the summer of 1935 were not typical of the urban relief population during the period. They were not run-of-the-mill cases. An examination of the characteristics of the 1,108 cases will show how they differed from others in the general relief load. Consideration of some of their characteristics may also give an indication of the type of case that is most apt to secure private employment.

Duration of Relief

Probably the outstanding difference between the cases that obtained employment and the cases in the general relief load was the length of time they had received public aid. At the time they left relief the private employment cases had been receiving assistance for an average of 6 months; the October 1935 general relief load had an average relief duration of almost 14 months (appendix table 11). Along with the more intangible factors, such as employability and personality, that determine an employer's selection of a worker, the fact that the workers in the cases studied had been unemployed for a shorter length of time and, therefore, had suffered less loss of occupational skill undoubtedly gave them an advantage over their relief fellows in competing for available jobs.

Size of Case

As shown in table 6, the one- and two-person cases were under-represented, relatively, in the private employment group, and the three-, four-, and five-person cases were overrepresented.

¹⁴A follow-up survey made in March 1936 found the average weekly budget in 55 cities to be \$24.66 or \$1,282 a year. See National Industrial Conference Board, *Local Variations in the Cost of Living*, Conference Board Bulletin, Vol. IX, No. 12, December 10, 1935, et seq.

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Table 6.—Size of Cases Studied, September 1935, and of Cases in General Relief Load, October 1935, 13 Cities

Size of case	Cases studied, September 1935	General relief load, October 1935 ¹
Total: Number-----	1,108	9,970
Percent-----	100.0	100.0
1 person-----	9.6	23.6
2 persons-----	16.4	21.3
3 persons-----	22.3	17.4
4 persons-----	20.1	13.7
5 persons-----	14.6	9.9
6 persons-----	6.8	5.9
7 persons-----	4.5	3.5
8 persons-----	2.4	2.2
9 persons-----	1.8	1.2
10 persons or more-----	1.5	1.3

¹Carmichael, F. L. and Payne, Stanley L., *The 1935 Relief Population in 13 Cities: A Cross-Section*, Research Bulletin Series I, No. 23, Division of Social Research, Works Progress Administration, Washington, D. C., January 1937.

Inasmuch as less income is needed to take a small case off relief than a large one, it might at first seem surprising that more small cases were not included in the group closed for private employment. Other studies,¹⁵ however, have demonstrated that the small-sized cases include a large proportion of the cases in the relief population that have no member able to work. This fact largely explains why so few of the small cases obtained private employment.¹⁶

Number of Employable Members

The private employment cases had only slightly more members 16 years of age and over who were working or seeking work than did the other employable cases in the general relief load. On October 31, 1935, the cases studied had an average of 1.6 such members. In the same month the employable cases receiving general relief had an average of 1.4 members 16—64 years of age working or seeking work.¹⁷ The number of workers a case, therefore, does not explain why the 1,108 cases left the relief rolls; their securing of employment was only partially the result of having more members looking for jobs.

¹⁵Foster, Sallie C., *A Study of Composition and Characteristics of the Relief Population, City of Paterson, N. J.*, Division of Social Research, Works Progress Administration, Paterson, N. J., 1936; Carmichael, F. L. and Payne, Stanley L., *The 1935 Relief Population in 13 Cities: A Cross-Section*, Research Bulletin Series I, No. 23, Division of Social Research, Works Progress Administration, Washington, D. C., January 1937; and Holzschuh, Alma, *The Case Load Composition*, California State Relief Administration, San Francisco, Calif., April 25, 1936.

¹⁶Another reason for the underrepresentation of the one-person cases is the fact that a large proportion (one-third) of that size case leaving relief during 1935 was closed because the cases could not be located by the relief agency. Cases closed because they could not be located were not, of course, included in the sample for this study although undoubtedly the reason that some of them failed to report to the agency was that they had secured private employment.

¹⁷Carmichael, F. L. and Payne, Stanley L., *op. cit.*

Of considerable significance, however, is the fact that almost all the private employment cases retained their employable status throughout the year. Only seven cases (0.6 percent) had lost all their employable members at the end of the study in September 1936 (appendix table 3). Although many of the cases were not able to retain their economic independence throughout the year, they at least did not lose their human resources—the ability of their members to work.

Age, Sex, and Race of Employable Members

During the summer of 1935 private industry selected more younger than older workers from the relief rolls. It took more men than women and more whites than Negroes in relation to their respective representations in the relief load (table 7).

Table 7.—Age, Sex, and Race of Employable¹ Persons, 16 Through 64 Years of Age, in Cases Studied and in the General Relief Load, October 1935, 13 Cities

Race and sex	Cases studied	General relief load ²
Average ³ age in years		
All races ⁴		
Male.....	35.5	39.7
Female.....	30.4	32.1
White		
Male.....	35.6	39.9
Female.....	28.9	29.3
Negro		
Male.....	35.7	39.1
Female.....	33.0	35.4
Sex ratio (males for every 100 females)		
All races ⁴	260	222
White.....	304	268
Negro.....	118	136
Race distribution (percent)		
All races.....	100	100
White.....	83	73
Negro.....	15	26
Other.....	2	1

¹16 years of age and over and working or seeking work.

²Data from a study of current changes in the urban relief population (1935) in files of the Division of Research (formerly Division of Social Research), Works Progress Administration, Washington, D. C.

³Median.

⁴Includes "other" races.

Occupations of Employable Members

It is generally known that skilled workers were in demand during 1935 and 1936. The effect of this demand is shown in a comparison of usual occupations¹⁸ of employable persons in the

¹⁸A person's usual occupation is the occupation at which he had worked longest in private industry during the preceding 10 years. If he had not worked at one private job for at least 4 consecutive weeks during the 10-year period he was considered inexperienced.

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Table 8.—Usual Occupation of Employable¹ Persons in Cases Studied and in the General Relief Load, September 1935, 13 Cities

Usual occupation	Cases re-studied	General relief load ²
Total percent.....	100.0	100.0
White-collar workers.....	13.7	15.3
Professional and technical workers.....	1.6	1.5
Proprietors, managers, and officials.....	2.0	2.8
Clerks and kindred workers.....	10.1	11.0
Skilled workers.....	16.4	11.7
Semiskilled workers.....	31.0	27.2
Unskilled workers.....	29.4	30.5
Laborers.....	17.0	14.7
Servants.....	12.4	15.8
Inexperienced persons.....	9.5	15.3

¹16 years of age and over and working or seeking work.

²Data from a study of current changes in the urban relief population (1935) in files of the Division of Research (formerly Division of Social Research), Works Progress Administration, Washington, D. C.

private employment cases and in the general relief population (table 8). Besides the skilled persons, semiskilled workers and laborers were also at an advantage in securing self-supporting jobs in the summer of 1935. White-collar workers, servants, and inexperienced persons were underrepresented in the private employment cases.

The underrepresentation of inexperienced persons points, of course, to the reluctance of employers to hire an untried worker. The difficulty these persons have in overcoming employers' attitudes toward lack of experience is brought out clearly by their work history during the 13 months of this study.

Of all the workers in these cases who had had no occupational experience prior to September 1, 1935, and who remained in the labor market throughout the period of the study, only two-fifths obtained jobs during the next 13 months. In contrast, 85 percent of the experienced workers found some employment during this period.

The differences in characteristics between the cases going into private employment and those in the active relief load indicate that the workers hired by private industry are not chosen at random. The employer has definite preferences as to the type of worker he wants.

At the time this study was made certain types of workers were in demand; in the future, industrial needs may change so that other types of workers will have the advantage in securing jobs. This suggests that it may be desirable to study closely trends in the demands for the various types of workers and, in so far as possible, to train the persons remaining on public assistance rolls so that they will be able to fulfill the needs of private industry.

Appendix

SUPPLEMENTARY TABLES

Table 1.—Number of Cases Studied in 13 Cities

City	Number of cases
All cities.....	1,108
Atlanta, Ga.....	102
Baltimore, Md.....	96
Bridgeport, Conn.....	58
Butte, Mont.....	57
Chicago, Ill.....	130
Detroit, Mich.....	94
Houston, Tex.....	110
Manchester, N. H.....	39
Omaha, Nebr.....	82
Paterson, N. J.....	72
St. Louis, Mo.....	96
San Francisco, Calif.....	100
Wilkes-Barre, Pa.....	72

Table 2.—Means of Support of Cases Studied by Month, October 1935—September 1936, 13 Cities

Means of support ¹	1935				1936							
	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September
Total: Number-----	1,108	1,108	1,108	1,108	1,108	1,108	1,108	1,107	1,107	1,107	1,106	1,106
Percent-----	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
General relief only-----	10.2	7.8	6.2	8.1	6.6	5.7	5.1	6.0	5.3	4.2	3.3	2.9
General relief and "other"-----	1.2	1.0	1.1	1.1	0.8	1.1	0.9	0.8	0.9	0.8	0.6	0.5
Works Program only-----	0.8	2.6	6.9	14.0	16.2	16.4	16.0	15.3	15.0	13.6	13.8	12.8
Works Program and "other"-----	0.3	0.4	0.8	2.0	2.1	3.1	2.5	2.5	2.3	3.0	2.3	2.3
Private employment only-----	63.1	56.1	52.0	48.1	47.2	46.8	47.9	50.8	53.0	54.7	55.7	57.1
Private employment and "other"-----	7.6	6.9	7.3	6.1	6.2	7.7	8.0	7.9	8.4	8.1	8.0	8.3
General relief and Works Program-----	1.7	8.1	8.9	3.5	4.2	2.2	0.9	0.8	0.4	1.1	1.4	0.6
General relief, Works Program, and "other"-----	—	0.5	0.9	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.5	—	—	—	—	—
General relief and private employment-----	8.5	7.2	5.8	5.0	4.5	4.2	4.9	2.9	2.8	2.7	2.4	2.6
General relief, private employment, and "other"-----	0.8	0.3	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.7	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.6	0.3
Works Program and private employment-----	1.4	3.0	3.9	5.2	5.8	6.5	7.4	7.7	7.4	7.0	7.3	7.4
Works Program, private employment, and "other"-----	0.2	0.5	0.6	1.1	1.0	1.5	1.5	1.3	1.4	1.1	1.2	1.4
General relief, Works Program, and private employment-----	1.3	2.0	1.7	0.9	1.0	1.1	0.5	0.5	0.2	0.1	0.3	0.4
General relief, Works Program, private employment, and "other"-----	0.1	0.3	0.2	—	—	—	0.1	0.1	—	—	—	—
No income-----	2.1	2.3	2.3	2.8	2.3	1.8	2.1	1.5	1.1	1.8	1.7	1.8
"Other" only-----	0.7	1.0	0.9	1.3	1.4	0.9	1.2	1.4	1.4	1.5	1.4	1.6

¹Cases with "other" or miscellaneous means of support had income from sources other than general relief, the Works Program, or private employment. In figure 1 cases having "other" means of support are not distinguished from cases without "other" means of support. For example, "general relief only" and "general relief and other," shown separately in this table, are combined and shown as "general relief only" in the figure.

²1 case with means of support not ascertainable is excluded from the total.

³2 cases with means of support not ascertainable are excluded from the total.

Table 3.—Number of Employable¹ Persons in Cases Studied, September 1935 and September 1936, 13 Cities

Number of employable persons in case	Sept. 1, 1935	Sept. 30, 1936
Cases studied		
Total: Number.....	1,108	1,108
Percent.....	100.0	100.0
None.....	—	0.6
1 person.....	60.6	56.5
2 persons.....	26.3	29.4
3 persons.....	9.3	9.5
4 persons.....	3.0	3.0
5 persons.....	0.5	0.7
6 persons.....	0.3	0.3
Employable persons		
Total employable persons.....	1,743	1,783
Average ² number per case.....	1.6	1.6
Total persons employable throughout the 13 months.....	1,636	
Total persons employable at some time during the 13 months.....	1,888	

¹16 years of age and over and working or seeking work.

²Arithmetic mean.

Table 4.—Number of Private Employment Jobs Held by Persons Employable¹ Throughout the 13 Months September 1935—September 1936, in Cases Studied, 13 Cities

Number of private jobs held during the 13 months	Persons employable throughout the 13 months	
	Number	Percent
Total.....	1,636	100.0
No jobs.....	309	18.9
1 job.....	601	36.7
2 jobs.....	341	20.8
3 jobs.....	184	11.3
4 jobs.....	83	5.1
5 jobs.....	32	2.0
6 jobs.....	29	1.8
7 jobs.....	15	0.9
8 jobs.....	12	0.7
9 jobs.....	15	0.9
10 jobs or more.....	15	0.9
Total jobs held.....	3,021	
Average ² number of jobs per worker.....	1.8	

¹16 years of age and over and working or seeking work.

²Arithmetic mean.

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Table 5.—Duration of Private Employment Jobs Ended During the 13 Months and of Jobs Continuing on September 30, 1936, 13 Cities

Duration of private employment jobs	Jobs ended from Sept. 1, 1935, to Sept. 30, 1936		Jobs continuing on Sept. 30, 1936	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total.....	¹ 2,205	100.0	² 1,002	100.0
Less than 1 week.....	380	17.2	24	2.4
1 week but less than 1 month.....	561	25.5	92	9.2
1 month but less than 2 months.....	272	12.3	112	11.2
2 months but less than 3 months.....	220	10.0	66	6.6
3 months but less than 4 months.....	143	6.5	57	5.7
4 months but less than 6 months.....	223	10.1	155	15.4
6 months but less than 8 months.....	146	6.6	86	8.6
8 months but less than 10 months.....	64	2.9	42	4.2
10 months but less than 12 months.....	55	2.5	37	3.7
1 year but less than 2 years.....	56	2.5	282	28.1
2 years or more.....	28	1.3	49	4.9
Not ascertainable.....	57	2.6	—	—
Average ³ number of months' duration.....	1.5		5.9	

¹A total of 1,988 persons 16 years of age and over were working or seeking work at some time during the 13 months. Of the jobs held by these persons, 2,205 ended during the period.

²A total of 1,783 persons 16 years of age and over were working or seeking work on September 30, 1936. Among them they held 1,002 jobs on that date.

³Median.

Table 6.—Amount of Annual Income From All Sources Combined of Cases Studied Which Had No General Relief or Works Program Income During the Year October 1935—September 1936, 13 Cities

Amount of annual income	Cases with no general relief or Works Program income	
	Number	Percent
Total.....	452	100.0
\$0—\$49.....	1	0.2
\$50—\$99.....	4	0.9
\$100—\$149.....	5	1.1
\$150—\$199.....	4	0.9
\$200—\$249.....	5	1.1
\$250—\$299.....	7	1.5
\$300—\$349.....	12	2.7
\$350—\$399.....	8	1.8
\$400—\$499.....	15	3.3
\$500—\$599.....	29	6.4
\$600—\$699.....	20	6.4
\$700—\$799.....	41	9.1
\$800—\$899.....	44	9.7
\$900—\$999.....	42	9.3
\$1,000—\$1,199.....	65	14.4
\$1,200—\$1,399.....	49	10.8
\$1,400—\$1,599.....	30	6.6
\$1,600—\$1,999.....	23	5.1
\$2,000—\$2,399.....	15	3.3
\$2,400—\$2,799.....	3	0.7
\$2,800 or more.....	4	0.9
Not ascertainable.....	17	3.8
Average ¹ annual income.....	\$1,010	

¹Arithmetic mean.

Table 7.—Amount of Annual Income From All Sources Combined of 4-Person Cases,¹ October 1935—September 1936, 13 Cities

Amount of annual income from all sources combined	4-person cases
Total: Number.....	175
Percent.....	100
\$100—\$149.....	—
\$150—\$199.....	1
\$200—\$249.....	1
\$250—\$299.....	1
\$300—\$349.....	1
\$350—\$399.....	1
\$400—\$499.....	3
\$500—\$599.....	7
\$600—\$699.....	8
\$700—\$799.....	15
\$800—\$899.....	11
\$900—\$999.....	13
\$1,000—\$1,199.....	15
\$1,200—\$1,399.....	5
\$1,400—\$1,599.....	6
\$1,600—\$1,999.....	3
\$2,000—\$2,399.....	2
\$2,400—\$2,799.....	1
\$2,800 or more.....	1
Not ascertainable.....	5
Average ² annual income.....	\$964

¹Cases having 4 members throughout the year.²Arithmetic mean.

Table 8.—Annual Cost of Living at Emergency and Maintenance Levels for a 4-Person Manual Worker's Family, March 1935, 11 Cities

City	Emergency level of living	Maintenance level of living
11-city average.....	¹ \$934	¹ \$1,302
San Francisco, Calif.....	1,001	1,390
Chicago, Ill.....	973	1,356
St. Louis, Mo.....	956	1,340
Detroit, Mich.....	944	1,318
Butte, Mont.....	932	1,284
Baltimore, Md.....	927	1,301
Bridgeport, Conn.....	920	1,296
Atlanta, Ga.....	911	1,268
Omaha, Nebr.....	909	1,258
Manchester, N. H.....	890	1,254
Houston, Tex.....	869	1,210

¹Weighted arithmetic mean based upon number of cases sampled in each of the 11 cities in the present study.Source: Stecker, Margaret Loomis, *Intercity Differences in Costs of Living in March 1935, 50 Cities*. Research Monograph XII, Division of Social Research, Works Progress Administration, Washington, D. C., 1937.

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Table 9.—Amount of Annual Works Program Income of Cases Studied, October 1935—September 1936, 13 Cities

Amount of annual Works Program income		Cases studied
Total: Number.....		1,108
Percent.....		100.0
Cases with Works Program income.....		40.2
\$0—\$49.....		3.7
\$50—\$99.....		2.8
\$100—\$149.....		2.6
\$150—\$199.....		3.0
\$200—\$249.....		2.1
\$250—\$299.....		2.2
\$300—\$349.....		2.1
\$350—\$399.....		2.4
\$400—\$499.....		5.7
\$500—\$599.....		5.2
\$600—\$699.....		3.3
\$700—\$799.....		1.6
\$800—\$899.....		1.9
\$900—\$999.....		0.7
\$1,000—\$1,199.....		0.7
\$1,200—\$1,399.....		0.2
Cases with no Works Program income.....		59.8
Average ¹ annual Works Program income:		
Total cases.....		\$159
Cases with Works Program income.....		396

¹Arithmetic mean.

Table 10.—Amount of Annual General Relief Income of Cases Studied, October 1935—September 1936, 13 Cities

Amount of annual general relief income		Cases studied
Total: Number.....		1,108
Percent.....		100.0
Cases with general relief income.....		49.2
\$0—\$49.....		17.2
\$50—\$99.....		12.5
\$100—\$149.....		8.0
\$150—\$199.....		4.0
\$200—\$249.....		2.6
\$250—\$299.....		1.6
\$300—\$349.....		1.0
\$350—\$399.....		0.6
\$400—\$499.....		0.9
\$500—\$599.....		0.5
\$600—\$699.....		0.3
Cases with no general relief income.....		50.8
Average ¹ annual general relief income:		
Total cases.....		\$55
Cases with general relief income.....		112

¹Arithmetic mean.

Table 11.—Duration of Last Relief Period of Cases Studied¹ and of October 1935 General Relief Load, 13 Cities

Number of consecutive calendar months in which relief had been received	Cases studied	October 1935 general relief load ²
Total: Number.....	³ 1,087	9,845
Percent.....	100.0	100.0
1—3 months.....	27.0	17.2
4—6 months.....	21.8	11.9
7—9 months.....	14.3	8.7
10—12 months.....	7.5	8.4
13—18 months.....	15.8	14.1
19—24 months.....	6.4	20.5
25—36 months.....	4.1	12.9
37 months or more.....	3.1	6.3
Average ⁴ number of months.....	6.3	13.6

¹Duration of relief at time case was closed between May and October 1935 because of private employment.

²Carmichael, F. L. and Payne, Stanley L., *The 1935 Relief Population in 13 Cities: A Cross-Section*, Research Bulletin Series I, No. 23, Division of Social Research, Works Progress Administration, Washington, D. C., January 1937.

³21 cases with duration of last relief period not ascertainable are excluded from the total.

⁴Median.



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